

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 06238 200809Z
ACTION AF-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, NI

SUBJECT: ALHADJI'S MIDNIGHT RIDE

1. AFTER HOSTING WITH CHARM AND FISCAL ABANDON A CHINESE RESTAURANT DINNER LAST NIGHT FOR EPA DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR BARBARA BLUM, ALHADJI ABUBAKAR ALHADJI DROVE ME TO THE AIRPORT TO SEEK OUT MS. BLUM'S ERRANT GARMENT BAG. THE BUREAU WILL REMEMBER ALHADJI AS THE ALTERNATELY IRASCIBLE AND ENGAGING PERMANENT SECRETARY OF INDUSTRIES WHO SO ABLY CHAIRED THE NIGERIANS SIDE IN THE RECENT BILATERAL ECONOMIC TALKS IN WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK.

2. WE FAILED TO LOCATE THE BAG--ALTHOUGH ALHADJI TERRORIZED THE CUSTOMS AND POLICE PERSONNEL STILL ON DUTY AT MIDNIGHT AND PROMISED TO RATTLE THE CAGES OF THE NIGERIA AIRWAYS GENERAL MANAGER AND THE COMMISSIONER OF CIVIL AVIATION IN THE MORNING-- IF HE COULD MAKE HIS TELEPHONE WORK.

3. MORE IMPORTANT WERE THE FOLLOWING NUGGETS OF INFORMATION GLEANED IN THE COURSE OF A 25-MINUTE, 50 MPH SPIN EACH WAY IN ALHADJI'S MERCEDES 280-S:

A. HE BRIEFED OBASANJO YESTERDAY ON THE RESULTS OF THE BILATERAL ECONOMIC TALKS. TOMORROW HE WILL SEE HIM AGAIN AND PRESENT THE AGREED JOINT REPORT.

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PAGE 02 LAGOS 06238 200809Z

B. OBASANJO'S HIGHLY GRATIFIED BY THE RESULTS OF THE TALKS. HE INTENDS TO APPOINT A COMMISSIONER, AS YET UNSPECIFIED, TO HANDLE ALL FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS INCLUDING "MEETING AND GREETING "USG TEAMS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, WHO COME TO NIGERIA TO IMPLEMENT AGREEMENTS MADE DURING THE TALKS. WHEN I QUERIED ALHADJI ON HOW THIS WOULD ACTUALLY WORK, HE ADMITTED THAT HE, PERHAPS ASSISTED BY OTHER PERMANENT SECRETARIES,

WOULD IN FACT BE USUALLY THE FIRST POINTS OF CONTACT FOR FOLLOW-UP PURPOSES, BUT OBASANJO WANTED TO HIGHLIGHT HIS OWN COMMITMENT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE NEW COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP BY RAISING THE LEVEL OF ATTENTION THAT THE DIALOGUE COULD RECEIVE IN THE FMG. ALHADJI SAID WE WOULD BE INFORMED OF THIS DECISION IN WRITING IN DUE COURSE. WE COULD THEN WORK OUT THE NECESSARY MODALITIES TOGETHER.

C. HE HAD KEPT HIS COMMITMENT TO RAISE THE CONSULAR ACCESS QUESTION WITH THE HEAD OF STATE. OBASANJO HAD SAID HE "WOULD LOOK INTO IT." (SOUND FAMILIAR?)

D. HE HAD BEEN DRIVING IN LAGOS SINCE 1963 AND HAD NEVER TOUCHED ANYONE YET. HE HAD BOUGHT HIS MERCEDES TWO YEARS AGO FROM CHIEF OF STAFF YAR-ADUA. "I DON'T HAVE TO SHARE HIS LOWPROFILE--BUT I DRIVE MYSELF WHEN I GO HOME TO SOKOTO BECAUSE I DRIVE BETTER THAN THE CHAUFFEURS." (HE IS RIGHT.) HE THEN PRESSED TWO BUTTONS. ONE SLID BACK THE SUN ROOF TO FLOOD US WITH THE GLORIOUS LAGOS MOON. THE OTHER GAVE US "BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS" IN STEREO.

EASUM

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